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Issue 6



# THE DIAMOND

## What now? A look into the future of Dordt University

Sam Landstra—Staff Writer

It's evening at the empty campus of Dordt University. As Vice President Howard Wilson and President Erik Hoekstra stand on the front steps of the Hoekstra household, not a car drives by, not a student walks past and waves hello. It has been a week since the university ordered its students to stay home after spring break as a protective measure against the COVID-19 virus. Only 80 people remain on the campus. All the academic buildings are dark.

"Where had all our friends gone?" Wilson said. "A sense sunk in that the world had really changed."

Since then, Wilson has been drawing up plans with his colleagues for a potential return to on-campus learning in the fall. Him and ten others have met together twice thus far to discuss a "rolling quarantine model" that anticipates challenges with the virus next academic year.

Separate teams have been formed to manage residence halls, dining, sporting events, and more in the new normal of social distancing. All



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ten of these task groups have received direction from research leader Dr. Kristin VandeGriend, a professor at Dordt who holds a masters in epidemiology and a doctorate in public health.

"We are looking at a wide variety of options," Wilson said. "I tell people that pretty much everything I say should have an asterisk behind it because it could change."

While the future is uncertain, Wilson and his team are planning on a normal start for the 2020-21 academic year with the original start-date of August 25 still intact. This date does hold the potential of being pushed back a week or two should a second spike in the virus occur in the late summer months.

As Wilson works with this mindset, he looks

to minimize the risks of a fully populated university. A considerable danger from this plan arises within the first few weeks of returning to campus. Over 1,500 students will be traveling from their respective 49 states and 24 countries and have the possibility of carrying the virus with them. He and his team hope to counter this threat by encouraging students to pack with them a personal thermometer and "as many fabric masks as they have pairs of underwear".

If students do show symptoms of COVID-19, the task force is considering the possibility of blocking off a section of a residence hall for these individuals. Should a sickly person decide to stay on campus instead of returning home, they could continue their schoolwork from there.

Continuing into this world of hypotheticals, Dordt is exploring multiple methods of social distancing. All fall classes have been capped at fifty students and a contact-tracing system that uses assigned seating to track and curtail the virus is being discussed. Consideration is even

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## English professors transfer to online learning

Lauren Hoekstra — Staff Writer

In the English Department, Dr. Bill Elgersma is not shy in his dislike for Canvas.

"I am not a fan of Canvas and it doesn't suit my character and experience in education," Elgersma said.

He much prefers to interact with students face-to-face, and even if he has a carefully thought out lesson plan, students may bring up more crucial points to the discussion that need to be worked through first. With Zoom meetings, education is made simple and loses many of the important concepts that face-to-face education maintains.

"...We can't talk over each other and we can't see each other to operate off of verbal cues," Elgersma said. "[Canvas] is stilted where my classroom is fair game for all of us."

Elgersma's main concern about online learning was that students "didn't sign up to be online." Students committed to Dordt because of the community and atmosphere of the school, not

the online learning experience. Especially for students who struggle with concentration issues or are not internally driven, online classes can be a huge struggle. Even for students who have gone to working during the week, finding time to do classwork can be difficult.

Dr. Bob De Smith, fellow English professor, has experienced some of the same concerns. Many of his students are also working during this time, providing them with only weekends to do homework. If the semester had started off with online classes, De Smith said he would "scarcely know them," which would make teaching these students difficult.

Throughout his online classes, De Smith sees some students thriving. They know what they have to do and when they have to do it.

However, he said that online learning is nothing like face-to-face teaching.

"...Classes become almost completely functional -- they are a means to an end rather than a community in which learning takes

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## Letters to healthcare workers

Evangeline Colarossi—Staff Writer

Two black plastic tubs sit outside of Ebby Prewitt's house in Des Moines, where paper and ink turn into encouragements for healthcare workers, patients, and nursing home residents. Prewitt is a senior Biology major at Dordt University and a local CNA. She realized a student need at Des Moines Christian could turn into a blessing for many others.

Prewitt has worked in a nursing home for several years and noted that patients' visitors are the highlight of their day and part of their daily routine. Without these visitors, each day can easily become mundane and Prewitt wanted to decrease the distance from the outside world, while still observing social distancing. For the workers that get to return home every day, the increase in work and stressful conditions can be just as hard, and Prewitt wanted to honor them as well.

"No matter what healthcare position they (workers) are in, every single part is important from the doctors all the way down to the CNAs," Prewitt said. "I wanted to find a way to

thank them for the work that they do every day that often doesn't get recognized, but also the extra work and effort they do during this time to keep everybody healthy and safe."

Prewitt reached out to the spiritual life director and principal at Des Moines Christian, knowing that the quarantine would greatly impact the service hours that students are required to complete each year. She suggested students "write letters in order to fulfill their service hour requirement". The project has expanded more than she anticipated, as students' parents and siblings and Prewitt's friends at Dordt have started sending in letters too.

"I have been blown away and encouraged by how many people have jumped on the project and shared my information with their friends' family or teachers in order to bless more people."

The letters are sorted by recipient and distributed among five different facilities. One collection box is for healthcare workers and the other is for nursing home residents or patients. If people are unable to drop off the

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Photo Credit: Ebby Prewitt



# ◆ News ◆

## Graduation in a box

Hannah Van Otterloo — Staff Writer

Graduating from college brings to a close what some consider the best four years of their life. For the class of 2020, the threat of COVID-19 has affected both the last few months of their education and the graduation ceremony itself.

Michael Vander Wal finished classes in fall of 2019, but he is disappointed at not having a graduation. “When I packed up and left after first semester I knew that...I would get to say one final goodbye when we all walked across the stage together. Well, now that can’t happen, and it is really quite depressing knowing that I was unable to say a final goodbye to so many people that have impacted my life.”

Dordt faculty, staff, and student leaders had to think outside the box to find solution: a graduation in a box and an online ceremony.

“As far as my reactions to online graduation go, I am quite conflicted,” Vander Wal said. “Considering the circumstances, I do think that this is the best thing that Dordt could do.”

Dordt mailed boxes to seniors containing a graduation cap and tassel, commencement program, diploma cover, a “first graduating class of Dordt University” shirt, and a Dordt

notebook from the Alumni Association.

While this abrupt ending has left many seniors feeling as though their college career is incomplete, Dordt’s attempt to recognize their achievements has been appreciated. In addition to their online commencement, seniors look forward to participating in a graduation celebration over Defender Days this fall with a “Year 0 Reunion” concluding the festivities. President Hoekstra has also invited graduating students to drop by and take a photo with him when they’re next in the area.

“Although I am not ecstatic about having a virtual commencement ceremony, I am grateful for all Dordt is doing to make graduation as meaningful as possible for the class of 2020” said Hayley Visser, a graduating senior majoring in elementary education, “I know not everyone will be able to attend next fall, but just having that weekend to look forward to and the opportunity to get some closure on our incredible years at Dordt that just had to end a little too soon has made me all the more thankful for DU.”

Dordt University’s online graduation ceremony will be held Friday, May 8, at 11a.m. CDT.



Photo Credit: Hannah Van Otterloo

## Dordt takes proactive recruitment and retention approaches

Jaclyn Vander Waal — Staff Writer

At this time of year Dordt University is usually host to 150-175 prospective students for campus visits. While campus is mostly empty, this year they reached more than 750 with virtual visits.

Businesses and organizations are concerned with how the COVID-19 pandemic will affect their future, but Dordt officials are pleased with their recruitment and retention efforts.

Campus visit statistics from Eric Tudor, associate director of strategy and recruitment, show Dordt continues to press forward with recruitment.

Even though Dordt’s campus has been locked down to both the community and visitors, Tudor is thrilled the recruitment team has been no less busy.

“Our teams have been busy reinventing processes and reimagining how to best serve families,” he said.

Since the quarantine began, Dordt has not missed one campus visit date—with the first virtual visit being set up in just five days. While many schools are prerecorded college students and professors to offer virtual tours on-demand, Tudor said Dordt is not taking this “safe approach.”

“Alternatively, we’re doing most of our experience live, including faculty appointments, a student panel and admissions counselor visits,” he said. “We believe that it’s important to communicate Dordt’s personable, transparent and authentic identity in these visits.”

Recruitment approaches have changed during quarantine. Recruiters are not traveling and are working remotely, and students are not coming onto the physical campus. Tudor recognizes the positives in this situation, however. Prospective students and their parents are more accessible than they’ve ever been, and their priorities have not changed.

“We still get to begin every day knowing that families are seeking the best educational future for their children,” Tudor said. “Relationships with these families are far stronger than a month ago. We’ve shared our joys and our challenges, and our team has further distinguished Dordt from other institutions by the ways they lead with empathy and love in an uncertain time.”

Most importantly, the mission of Dordt’s recruitment team has not changed.

“Our team passionately pursues right-fit students and helps them discern whether Dordt is where God is calling them,” he said. “This may no longer be happening face to face, but through Facetime, phone calls, texts and emails, we’re having meaningful conversations and building authentic relationships.”

Dordt officials have also been actively working to ensure retention of current students. The biggest project they have unveiled has been the Hope Fund. This fund will assist students who are financially impacted by COVID-19.

Harlan Harmelink, director of financial aid at Dordt, said the need for this fund became apparent through students’ stories: Parents who lost jobs, parents who saw reductions in income due to businesses that slowed or closed, parents who had to give up part-time jobs to stay at home with their children, and students who are uncertain if internships or summer jobs will be available.

“Contributions to the Hope Fund will be used to assist students who might otherwise find it difficult to return to Dordt next fall,” he said. The funds are being raised through donations on Dordt’s website at [www.dordt.edu/hope](http://www.dordt.edu/hope).

“Some donors are in a position to do more, but every dollar makes a difference,” Harmelink said.

He also understands that this fund goes beyond finances—seeing it as a way for Dordt to fulfil its Christian duty.

“Yes, this is being done to assist students and

## Unexpected effects of coronavirus

Katie Ribbens—Staff Writer

Coronavirus. It started out as an obscure word, something happening on the other side of the globe. Most people thought it would be like the common cold, or, at worst, influenza. Nothing to worry about. People need to stop stressing. Now, everyone knows of the illness. It’s brought our entire nation and globe to a stop. When was the last time colleges shut down? Have we ever had a stay-at-home order in the U.S.? Gathering together for any event—church, sports, concerts, graduations—are a thing of the past. This is an inconvenience, but many people still believe that getting COVID-19 will only cause cold-like symptoms. But what if that’s not the case?

“The common cold doesn’t kill people,” Dordt alumnus Terry Ribbens, a doctor at St. Luke’s Hospital in Boise, Idaho, said. Coronavirus is also 5-20x more deadly than influenza, and the biggest concern for a while was that hospitals would be overwhelmed. Now, medical personnel are learning more about the virus. “I think some of the unexpected symptoms that are a little surprising for us are the loss of taste and smell. And with that, it shows that it is impacting the central nervous system, and some people are also reporting hallucinations.”

Other Dordt graduates are in the field witnessing and trying to stave off the effects of this virus.

Alyssa Groen is the Elder Program Coordinator at the Nampa Family Justice Center in Idaho. She specifically works with the elderly population, which are most at risk of getting the virus, but more than that, they’re at risk of abuse because of it.

“One of the tactics of abusers is isolation,” Groen said. She is concerned that the stay-at-home order has increased the likelihood of serious injury, or even death. “We kind of feel

like there’s a storm coming, because people right now are home and are in abusive situations that things are going to escalate.”

Perhaps one of the most surprising effects of coronavirus has been the surge of PTSD.

Ribbens said that coronavirus produces such serious symptoms that patients have to be on a ventilator for weeks instead of days as seen with other pneumatic illnesses. The extended stay in the ICU leads to disorientation and stress.

“Anywhere between a quarter to a half of patients in the ICU will have symptoms of PTSD,” Ribbens said. “There are some people who experience these vivid dreamlike states, and when they experience those, they think they are real. And these are so real to them that it causes a PTSD-like state afterwards.”

People that recover from the virus are reporting disturbing symptoms, but the isolation itself has also been a catalyst for individuals predisposed to anxiety. The stress of economic crisis, concern for at-risk loved ones, and being trapped inside a house has caused some people to crack.

“Unfortunately, a lot of abusers we see have PTSD,” Groen said. Groen believes that, of her clientele, those now trapped in an abusive situation will emerge with PTSD as well. “I know a lot of them are really lonely and isolated and so as a worker, I know how important it is to contact them and keep in touch with them.” Keeping in touch with her clients may mean the difference between life and death.

“I do feel like this particular population that I’m working with will be affected more by the coronavirus than possibly other groups,” Groen said of the elderly. Ribbens agrees that elderly, overweight, diabetic, and otherwise ill are at much higher risk of complications. However, we are seeing widespread effects amongst the young population as well.

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to help with enrollment and retention,” he said. “However, this is also a very real way for us as brothers and sisters in Christ to uphold each other during this difficult time. It is an opportunity to give unto others as God has blessed us and to help bear one another’s burden.”

Students who have a need are encouraged to contact a faculty or staff member, coach or director, or anyone they have a relationship with at Dordt to share how they have been impacted financially in this time. The Dordt personnel will then relay the information to Harmelink.

Harmelink said the Hope Fund does not have an application deadline because students and their families may not experience the full financial impact until later this summer. For example, many students are unaware of the status of summer employment.

“We remain committed to work closely with each of our students and families as we become aware of their situation,” he said. “We will

work to be good stewards of the funds that donors have entrusted to us and strive to use the resources available to our office in a way to provide a measure of help to as many students as necessary.”

With these proactive efforts underway, Tudor and Harmelink are optimistic that Dordt will see many familiar and new faces for the fall semester.

“I have been encouraged to see how many prospective students are seriously preparing for next fall by submitting documents to our office in anticipation of starting college,” Harmelink said. “It is also my understanding that registration for fall by our current students is nearly on pace with this time last year. Overall, students are adapting well to online learning, but I have no doubt that they are eager to get back to campus and once again embrace the full Dordt environment and experience.”



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# ◆ Feature ◆

## Student Without Borders club fills leadership roles

Allison Wordes — Staff Writer

Because of the current crisis, Dordt’s Student Without Borders Club has faithfully been conducting their regular meetings over zoom. While other events and clubs have sadly fizzled out because of the missed opportunity to gather in person, SWB has been on top of things getting their team organized for the 2020-2021 school year.

The President, Vice-President, and Event Coordinator were all graduating seniors. One of the goals of the club at their meetings was to set up a new leadership team for the upcoming season.

In the meeting, the club discussed who would be interested in these particular roles and who wanted to switch roles for the coming year. Then current president, Joy Kim, sent out a google forms survey for the open positions to people who were on the SWB email chain, who regularly attended the events and would be interested. There are also added two trainee positions, so that the experienced leaders can pass on their skills. They also posted on the SWB Facebook page and the Dordt International Facebook to get students interested.

The sign-up form remained open for about a week before the next meeting, where the positions were voted on anonymously. The members for the upcoming 2020-2021 year are as follows:

Yeelim Shin as president, Doreen Christabel as vice-president (as well as training the treasurer position), Obed Miranda Duarte as secretary, Enoch Ariko as event coordinator, Abby Barrientos as event coordinator trainee,

Delano Adamson as marketing, David Riadi as graphic design, Siena Rose as graphic design trainee,

This year’s new president, Yeelim Shin, is taking over from Joy Kim, who led the team successfully this past year.

“I enjoyed taking care of the different events, even though as president I didn’t get to do the hands-on things,” said Kim. While similar to the events held previous years, they were still original. For example, Curry Craze was exciting because the Emcees brought variety with their games and trivia. For the Cultural Fair, there may have been less talent show performances, but because of that there were more cultural games that brought audience interaction.

“When the events actually happened, I could see all the members working together,” said Kim. “I could see the end result and say, ‘I am proud!’”

This year, the group also paired with the art club to host an origami night—with success. Kim is hopeful for how the group will interact with other clubs next year.

“Clubs can work together, like with the origami night, to plan together and attract students with different interests.”

The club was planning a trap shooting event, joined with the trap shooting club, with a focus on international students—unfortunately, this did not work out due to the current pandemic situation. They will try again for it next year under the new leadership roles.

“I was the secretary for the SWB club for the last two years and I think that really helped me prepare for the role as the president,” said Shin, “because I was able to see and understand how

each event worked and the role each member did during our meetings.”

There are a lot of events to plan for, including Curry Craze in the fall and the Cultural Fair in the spring. With huge events like this, the SWB has to do a lot of planning and preparation, which is not for the weak. The minds of this leadership team need to be creative, clever, and prime at problem-solving.

Most importantly, however, they need to have a love for culture.

“I started at Dordt three years ago, and the SWB leadership has changed each year,” said coordinator of Off-Campus and Multicultural Student Programs, Rebecca Tervo. “However, it has continued to be a group of dedicated students who are truly passionate about creating opportunities for cross-cultural engagement. I’m confident in the leaders we have chosen for next year, and I’m excited to work with them!”

“The SWB committee is usually formed by internationals and we also encourage non-internationals to join our club too,” said Shin. “We give back to the community by creating events where anyone is welcome to come and enjoy.”

The reason that SWB exists is because it intends to bring together international students who are miles from home, yes, but also to bring in nationals who care about them and the expansive cultural significance that they represent.

“Our biggest event, the Cultural Fair brings a little bit of our home and culture to Sioux Center,” said Shin, “in order for the community to taste and see different cultures around the world.”



Photo Credit: Allison Wordes

Students who participate in the events put on by SWB have an opportunity to learn from each other and grow in their knowledge and love of something outside of themselves.

“As the new president, I’m very excited for what next year will bring and what new events we will create for the community,” said Shin.

The club is still looking to fill the position of treasurer.

## (cont.) English professors transfer to online learning

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place,” he said. “It cannot replace a teacher, a book, a small group of students, and a transformative mission.”

After more than 30 years at Dordt, De Smith was hoping to conclude his time at the university without online teaching. But due to the coronavirus pandemic, he has had to adopt practices that no one was expecting.

Although he uses Canvas for students to submit assignments and use resources such as texts and videos, online teaching was a new

experience for De Smith. The week that all professors had to prepare their material to be transferred online was “hard work” for him, but it was a “good thing” to learn something new.

During this time of social distancing, Elgersma commented that he has been missing his students and the social aspect of his job quite a bit.

“Teaching is the best no-job in the world,” he said. “I don’t have to hang out with people my age and I don’t have to act my age as long as I am with students. They are my energy and

my adrenaline. They have brilliant ideas and they get excited about discoveries that I get to witness.”

While at his home, he is having to “reinvent” himself without having his students to do that for him.

However, according to Elgersma, the coronavirus pandemic gives students the opportunity to see if online learning is for them and if they would prefer it over the physical classroom.

“We as educational institutions now have data

that show where its benefits are and where the gaps are,” he said. “Our students have now had the experience and for some of them, they may decide not to return to a residential campus. For others, they will speak knowledgeably about the gaps in online education as it pertains to them. So, this experience is a test drive that we must take and we will make informed decisions based on our personal experiences.”

## A different kind of church experience

Ben Boersma — Staff Writer

It was not a typical Good Friday service at Dispatch Christian Reformed Church.

There were only five people physically present, maybe seven: my family and me, the organist, and the neighbors from across the road. Otherwise, the building was empty.

A tripod stood in front of the pulpit with my mom’s phone mounted in place. She would be running the camera that evening. To one side of the pulpit stand a cross made of two broken hedge posts from someone’s pasture fence. The black cloth of Good Friday drapes over it as is usual during Lent.

I sat in the back at the church sound board, something I have done in one form or another since I started high school. We had a few minutes before the service started yet.

My mom, Lynn Boersma, gave me a small Ritz cracker to have during communion later in the service.

“Did you get any juice from home?” she asked me.

I shook my head, continued moving sliders on the board, and readied the power point for the songs and sermon. My dad, Rev. Steve Boersma, came up from the kitchen with a small glass of red Kool-Aid for me. I took it and put it next to my cracker: The body and blood of Christ given for you. Take, eat, drink, remember, and believe...

It wasn’t your typical Good Friday service. Then again, ever since COVID-19 hit, forcing most of the country into quarantine, nothing

has been exactly normal. When the federal government limited the size of social gatherings to less than ten people, churches had to rethink the ways they did their services. Some, such as Faith CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa, had been streaming their services before the epidemic. For them, live streaming became the primary way of holding their services. Other churches, such as my home church in Cawker City, Kansas, and Calvin CRC in Dundas, Ontario, Canada, had to develop new ways of broadcasting their services.

“The main challenges were figuring out the technology,” said MaryAnn VanStarkenburg, whose husband Ken is the pastor of Calvin CRC. “Getting it so that it can be a smooth experience for the congregation is an ongoing challenge.”

Because of the spotty internet connection around Dundas, a small town just northwest of Hamilton and about forty miles southwest of Toronto, the VanStarkenburgs have to record in sections. The sermon, prayers, and related parts of the service are recorded and uploaded to Vimeo from the pastor’s office. They include separate links for music.

“We are working on adding our praise team, but that hasn’t happened yet,” said VanStarkenburg. “If we make the file size too big then people have difficulty viewing it.”

Even so, the congregation has responded well. “The response has been good for the quality and the ‘coziness’ of the pastor preaching from his office,” said VanStarkenburg.

Most of their views come from members of

the church, but once in a while, they will have someone view the service from a different part of the world. They are not the only ones. Dispatch CRC, which is ten miles out in the country, has had views from as far away as Australia and the Philippines.

“We are viewing our livestream more as an outreach than as just a worship service for our own members,” said Rev. Boersma.

Like many pastors, they are finding that their services are reaching more than just their own congregation. They chose to broadcast their service to Facebook because of its ease of setup. “Our goal was to get the livestream up as easily as possible and as quickly as possible,” said Rev. Boersma.

The Monday after Dordt’s extended spring break ended, they started setting up the page. By Thursday, they were live for the first time. Rev. Boersma sat at the council room table and explained how to access the service. Lynn Boersma ran the camera. Their first live worship service had over a hundred views within the first 24 hours.

While many of those views are from church members, others are from people in the surrounding area. Dispatch is a small farming community located on the northeast shore of Lake Wacanda, the largest man-made lake in Kansas. People have tuned into the livestream from the surrounding towns of Cawker City, Downs, Glen Elder, and even farther towns such as Beloit and Osborne.

“We’re reaching our local community as well as the global community,” said Lynn Boersma,

who notes that the best — and sometimes the most distracting — part of the service is seeing the reactions to the service.

“I get to see all the ‘likes’ and ‘loves’ while I’m filming,” she said. “It’s a lot like the viewers are saying ‘Amen’ during the sermon.”

For many pastor’s families, including my own, livestreaming the worship service has become something that involves the whole family. Yet I still find it a little awkward to go to church in a mostly empty sanctuary. At the same time, though, because of technology, we are still worshipping together. It’s something my dad tries to emphasize at every service.

Even so, that sense of awkwardness affects some church members as well. When Faith CRC switched to just the livestream, it took a little getting used to.

“The specialness of greeting others and feeling part of a special family together was missing,” said Clara Wolterstorff. She and her husband Nic have attended Faith CRC since they moved from Central Minnesota. “In a home setting we missed the participation of singing as a group, the responsive readings, and so on.”

Faith CRC broadcasts a relatively complete service, including a live worship team, usually made up of just one family. For Maundy Thursday, Rev. Bob Pollema and Pastor Cliff Hoekstra retold the story of Jesus’ death using objects provided by members of the congregation.

“Watching the different groups lead worship is always neat to experience,” said Wolterstorff.



## Onward review

Zach Dirksen—Staff Writer

The new Pixar film *Onward* begins with a short history of the world in which the film inhabits. We are placed in the middle of a fantastical realm, not unlike Narnia or Tolkien's Middle Earth. We see knights battling monsters and wizards casting spells. Magic is used to help others. But, as we soon learn, magic is difficult to master, and faster and easier substitutes, like electricity, soon become more popular. Fast forward a few centuries, and this fantasy world has become a lot like our own, save for a few notable differences. Instead of humans, the dominant races here seem to be a myriad of humanoid fantasy creatures, including elves, centaurs, and goblins. Unicorns have become common vermin, and dragons have become domesticated like dogs.

In the middle of all this familiar fantasy, we center on Ian (voiced by Tom Holland), a young elf struggling to find his place in the world. Ian lives in the shadow of his deceased father, a charismatic and likable guy everyone has fond memories of. Ian, however, is unassuming and timid. He's scared to drive, make friends, or attract attention to himself. Ian lives with his single mother and his older brother Barley (voiced by Chris Pratt), who serves as Ian's polar opposite. Barley is brash, outspoken, and completely obsessed with the fantastical history of his world.

On Ian's 16th birthday, his mother gives him what appears to be a magic staff, along with instructions for a spell that can temporarily resurrect he and Barley's late father. However, the spell goes a bit awry, producing only the lower half of their father, animated from the waist down. With only a day before the spell runs out, Ian and Barley must embark on a

dangerous road trip/quest in order to complete the spell—and who knows, they might even bond a little along the way.

If I'm being honest, it took me a bit to get into *Onward*. Something about the first 45 minutes or so of the movie just felt so distinctly not Pixar. The high-quality animation and voice-cast was there, but the story seemed to tread ground closer to that of a Dreamworks movie. (Dreamworks is great too, don't get me wrong.) It just missed the heart and creativity that I've come to love and expect from Pixar. Having just revisited *Toy Story 4*, I was somewhat disappointed by how different the levels of Pixar-ness were between the two. That is, until I saw the final half of the movie.

The second and third acts of this movie click so well together and bring everything together into such a great climax that you forget all about the shortcomings of the first act. It brings you the tear-jerking Pixar moments you expect in a wholly unexpected way. I won't write too much about it here because it's really something you should see for yourself.

Tom Holland brings a convincing youth and timidity to Ian, in much of the same way that endeared us to his version of Peter Parker. Chris Pratt dives back into his Park and Recreation persona, playing up his own innate sense of youthful obliviousness. Julia Louis-Dreyfus plays their mother, Laurel with a surprising amount of warmth that we don't often see from her.

*Onward* has some problems, and it's by no means my favorite Pixar movie, but once you move past them, it really comes into its own. The world of the movie is one made for exploration, and the film makes great use of it. With the help of a stellar voice-cast, it's a very sweet and fun time.



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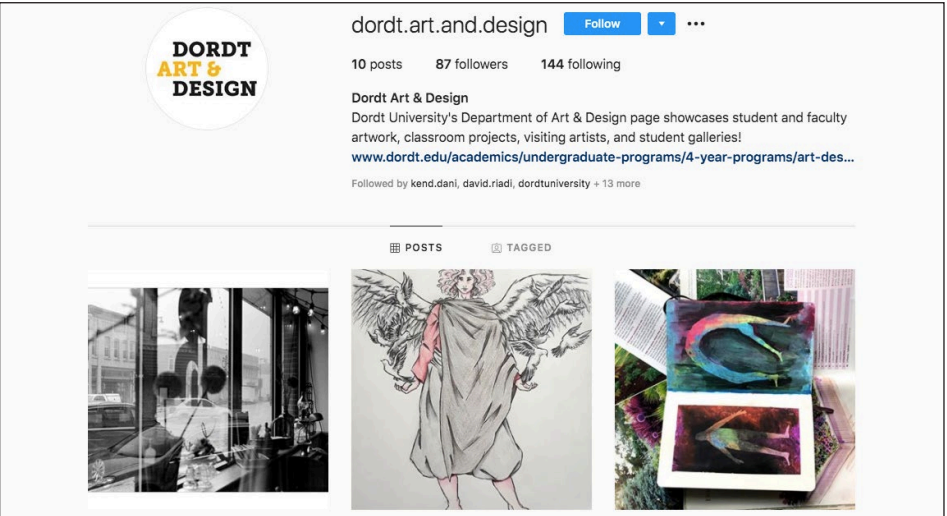
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## Sharing Defender art

Yage Wang—Staff Writer



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As people all over the world social distance under the threat of COVID-19, many museums have closed. In order to allow people to see their works, institutions like the Louvre Museum, Van Gogh Museum, and British Museum are creating virtual tours. In a similar effort, Dordt's art department has created an Instagram account to showcase student and faculty art.

The account focuses on sharing artistic creations rather than reaching a goal of competing or inspiring the viewers. As a result of this, the Dordt art department rather emphasizes encouraging young artists to create artwork, even during the severe time of social restrictions.

"Much of the art-making process involves showing our art as well—both completed pieces and in-process works. That is lacking in this new environment that we're dealing with this semester due to COVID-19," said professor Vaughn Donahue, who teaches graphic design courses at Dordt.

The account posted a variety of artwork in its first week. Photography, drawing, painting,

and even pictures of baking cookies fill the feed. However, submissions aren't limited to exhibitable and completed artworks.

David Riadi, a junior graphic design minor, said while he isn't comfortable sharing all his art the Instagram account is a way to artists to become more confident showing their work. "It's not meant to be kept or stored in somewhere that no one can see," Riadi said, "Regardless of everything in it that can be good or bad, you got to share it, and that's how we improve it too."

During a pandemic a small art account on social media is not something of huge note, but many students and professors at Dordt are working through this account to remind people that creativity continues.

"Especially during this time of distance, we thought it would be important to give students an opportunity to share their work with their fellow students, as well as the Dordt community as a whole," Donahue said, "So much art-making is still happening, even though we aren't together physically, and it's important that we share that."

## Pandemic: the fortune-telling documentary

Lindsay Kuiper—Staff Writer

Netflix subscribers have set their sights on *Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* due to the current coronavirus crisis. It only started gaining popularity in March despite its release on January 22, 2020.

The series focuses on doctors and healthcare workers around the globe who dedicate their lives to the eradication of pandemic threats. Filmed in 2019, many of the interviewees describe how an international outbreak would uncover the vulnerabilities in virtually all health services.

While the documentary mainly focuses on the likelihood of a variation of the influenza virus becoming a major issue, it features many hauntingly accurate predictions of events that have occurred during the coronavirus outbreak. In the first episode, Dr. Dennis Carroll states, "When we talk about another flu pandemic happening, it's not a matter of if, but when." It just so happens that the "when" Carroll was describing happened sooner rather than later.

When watching the series, I found myself double-checking the release date more than once because I couldn't believe its impeccable timing, and Executive Producer Jeremiah Crowell would agree. He said the show felt like a "horrible coincidence." The first three episodes were filmed before the first coronavirus case of 2019 was discovered and was released just weeks before the United States went into lockdown.

The show is a sobering lesson on the selfless heroism of those who work in the field of health. Its message could not be more relevant to current events. However, without the coronavirus crisis, the chances of this show gaining popularity would have been slim. Without looking at it through the lens of our current pandemic, the show would simply be another sensationalist series about the dangers

of the future.

Even though its mainly highlighted experts working towards prevention of widespread illnesses, some parts of the show retrospectively discussed historical outbreaks such as Ebola or the flu pandemic of 1918. According to the show, over 50 million people died from the flu, which is more than those that died in World War I and II combined. However, Crowell explained that the coronavirus is not projected to be nearly as deadly as the flu of 100 years ago.

The show had an impressive number of health-related subjects such as a hospital in India, anti-vaccine mothers, and emergency management of biometric companies. There was no shortage of information - with six episodes clocking in at around 50 minutes each, the show is not for those with short attention spans.

With ratings of 100% on Rotten Tomatoes and 6.3/10 on IMDb, it is evident that many viewers disagree on the quality of the show. I personally enjoyed it because the interviewed experts were professional, yet relatable. The pacing of the show was well-timed and kept my attention, switching from scenes in the United States to stories playing out in Asia. It expanded my knowledge on what it takes to live in the world of healthcare, and my empathy for these workers increased greatly.

*Pandemic: How to Prevent an Outbreak* is currently only available on Netflix.



Photo Credit: Netflix

## Music recitals performed on livestream

Sydney Brummel—Staff Writer

The realities of social distancing have changed many aspects of day-to-day life. Dordt music students, who often host recitals towards the end of each semester, face the unique experience of performing to an online audience.

On April 15, 2020, Amy Van Fossen, a senior art major with a minor in music performance, performed her piano recital via Facebook from Asbury United Method Church in Bettendorf, IA. Originally planning on giving her recital on April 4 in the B.J. Haan Auditorium, the changed setting and online audience presented new challenges and opportunities.

"Unfortunately, I could not play the first song, the 'Prelude by Bach,' on a harpsichord as planned," Van Fossen said. "Also, the dynamic contrast of the second song, the 'Sonata by Beethoven,' did not come across as successfully because of the limitations of the recording technology."

Still, Van Fossen enjoyed the benefits of having her recital closer to home and a little later in the semester. With more practice time, she was able to master her pieces even further.

"I played on a Pleyel Double Grand piano in the Quad Cities...being able to perform on the Pleyel was a great opportunity!" Van Fossen said. "Also, because of the time spent at home, I think the duet, *Scaramouche*, came together better than I ever could have expected... [My mom and I] could really play 'as one voice' on one instrument. This would not have been possible if I were at school."

While the church was technically closed, they allowed Van Fossen to rent the space and provided the livestream with their own equipment. Her brother and father helped with other set-up.

Overall, Van Fossen felt that her senior recital

went well, even though the circumstances were far different than she could have expected.

"I was really grateful for the support of my family and especially my piano teacher, Mrs. Wielenga," Van Fossen said.

Sisters Maggie and Hannah Burgsma also performed an online recital together. Maggie, a senior business major with a music performance minor, played her harp while Hannah, a sophomore nursing major with a music minor, performed on both harp and piano. The two first scheduled their recital to take place on April 24 in the B.J. Haan, and they decided to keep that date, despite the drastic change in location and circumstance.

After returning to their home in Ontario, Canada, the sisters initially planned to livestream their pieces in their music room in their house. But due to technical and sound issues they began to look for other venue options.

"We contacted a few other churches and people for options," Hannah said, "but a week before our recital, we still weren't sure if we were going to be able to even still pull it off,"

Eventually, the two found a venue at the church their aunt and uncle attended.

"It was such a blessing and relief when our uncle responded...saying their church was willing to help us out and that he would take care of all the tech for us," Hannah said.

Their teachers, Anna Vorhes and Mary Lou Wielinga, other professors, and family members assisted by either setting up the venue or planning the logistics of the evening.

The Burgsma sisters also experienced several advantages and disadvantages to an online performance. They found it difficult to find someone to run the tech for their recital, but having it online allowed them to reach a wider audience.



Photo Credit: Hannah Burgsma

"People we knew in nursing homes were able to livestream it, one family used it as background music for their supper, and our aunt and uncle who helped us out with the tech used it as their first date night in a while!" Hannah said.

After carefully arranging the evening of their recital, the two sisters skillfully performed a beautiful repertoire with their two instruments.

"Time literally flew by, and we were actually enjoying the whole experience so much of just being able to perform our pieces and the opportunity to create beauty in the middle of what our world is going through," Hannah said. The sisters expressed deep appreciation for all the support and encouragement they received



Photo Credit: Amy Van Fossen

from both their home and Dordt communities.

Although neither of these recitals were performed in Dordt's B.J. Haan, the students played music still heard and applauded by an appreciative audience.

"The night of our recital was another opportunity to reflect on how much of an honor and how humbling it is that the creator of the universe allows us to reflect his perfect beauty in a small way through the gift of music," Hannah said.

"I thank God for giving us music, and for all of the precious people he has brought into my life," Van Fossen said. "I am also so thankful that we can sing in our hearts to him, and he surely hears us."

## Opinion: The shows must go on

Gretchen Lee—Staff Writer

As people seek new at-home entertainment, some theater companies have released recordings of their shows for the general public to enjoy.

Over the past few weeks, musicals and plays have started popping up on YouTube and theater websites and, this time, they aren't bootlegs. Several theaters from around the world have made recordings of their shows available on a variety of platforms to provide at-home entertainment to those practicing social distancing and quarantining. In most cases, the theaters have requested donations to help

support their staff and actors, but they also hope to allow people to see shows that might not otherwise have the opportunity.

One such theater is the Globe—the theater that was once home to William Shakespeare and his troupe. The Globe has been hosting watch parties for their recordings of some of Shakespeare's most famous plays so people can discuss the show while watching. For those unable to make it to the live viewing, the shows remain on YouTube for several weeks following each watch party. So far, The Globe has released *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but they are planning on releasing more plays until the end of June. These shows will include *The*

*Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Another YouTube channel, appropriately titled "The Shows Must Go On!," has been working with Andrew Lloyd Weber to release recordings of some of his most famous musicals every Friday. The shows, which have included *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*, are made available for 48 hours each over the weekend. Each show requests donations to the YouTube channel in support of theaters and their staff and encourages people to stay home.

## The New Abnormal album review

Caleb M. S.—Staff Writers

Seven years since their last album, New York based alt/rock group The Strokes have returned with a brand-new album. Their first since the aptly-named *Comedown Machine* in 2013, *The New Abnormal* is, lackluster but has bright spots. The biggest win off the album is the fact that the guitar line off the opening track "The Adults Are Talking," has been stuck in my head for over a week now. However, the album seems to be devoid of true artistic passion, a claim substantiated by the album crediting Billy Idol's "Dancing With Myself" in "Bad Decisions."

Note for note, as a matter of fact. Despite the lack of excitement or extreme creativity within the album, it is not a flop, or unpleasant to listen to. There is a time and a place for massive, swelling riffs, and aggressive vocals, but that has never been the aim of The Strokes as a band. *The New Abnormal* fits well into the group's lineup and is at home in the more chilled-out vein that newer albums from well-established groups seem to fall into (i.e. Weezer).

Each song on this new project hovers around the five-minute mark, a little longer than the established norm in the mainstream world. The album itself sits comfortably at 45 minutes

even, not a chore to listen too, but not short to the point where you finish and think: "Oh that's it?" Only nine tracks on the album makes it shorter by song than most of its length, but the thoughts and movements of the piece feel well articulated though the sub-ten track listing.

Musically, the album does piece together classic Strokes melody and rhythm, with a little help from some legends of the business. Besides Idol's "Dancing With Myself," Psychedelic Furs' "The Ghost in You" is credited for "Eternal Summer." Aside from the album opener, and "Ode to the Mets," no instrumental moment shines alone in this project. Rather, the strength comes from the blend and balance all throughout.

Lyrically, there are no overtly aggressive moments in *The New Abnormal*. The band has shied away from making political music, and prefers to stick with inoffensive topics: a past lover, reminiscing on days gone by, ballads of love for their home city, etc. etc.

The most listening hours I clocked on this most recent project from The Strokes were while I was at work in the factory, in a noisy environment. I didn't feel like I was missing much for lyrical content, but the cohesiveness of the project makes for an easy listen, all the

way through. Each song, for better or worse, sounds just similar enough to the previous that there is no real dissonance when going from piece to piece. Similarly, I logged two hours of straight listen to *The New Abnormal* while playing Minecraft, and the album felt plain good in that activity. The Strokes have created a project which will be sure to be played in coffee shops and restaurants for years to come. The music, lyrically and sonically, is non obtrusive, inoffensive. It does not detract from its surroundings, but does not command to be listened to without interruptions, as some projects I have examined this year do (*IGOR*, *Norman F\*\*\*ing Rockwell*). No, *The New Abnormal* is anything but what the title suggests, and that is ok. There is a place for non-obtrusive music, and a growing need, really. The album feels mature, and comfortable. After all, as the opening track reminds us: "The Adults Are Talking."

Instead of giving you a song breakdown this time around, I want to encourage you, as a writer and critic, to enjoy the music you may want to enjoy. I'm not naïve enough to think anyone takes my 600-800 words every two weeks as gospel, but if you read this portion regularly: thank you. Spend your summer

listening to music you love, music that makes you happy. Take this time of relative isolation to explore new artists, listen to old favorites, and share music with those you love. If you want to talk music or anything else, reach out. I'd be happy to delve into intricacies of my favorite albums I never got the chance to share this year, or share in enjoyment with you. As for me, I'll be listening to plenty of Lorde, Tyler, Lana, Ruralists, and more until I have the pleasure to write for you again. See you next August.

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Contributed Photo



# Into the woods: how social distancing can be utterly transcendental

Erika Buiter — Co-Chief Editor

Ever since American Literature I with Professor Josh Matthews and my discovery of Walt Whitman, transcendentalism—a 19th century philosophical movement which believes divinity pervades all of nature and humanity—has piqued my interest. During this spring semester, I had been slowly reading Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, mulling over Thoreau’s transcendental approach to living.

And then COVID-19 happened. During the longest spring break of my life, my brother Edwin, having finished Walden before me, decided we should build a hut. Our schools had gone online, sports were cancelled, everything was uncertain. Building a hut? It was the only logical thing to do.

Over the course of about six days, we hauled almost-rotting barn wood, stolen two-by-fours, broken bricks, old band shelves, buckets of screws, dirt and dusty mudflaps and wobbly sawhorses out to the west grove on our property, spending our mornings digging a foundation, raising the frame, screwing in a patchwork of wood for walls, and hoisting leaky metal siding onto our slanted roof. Our dad forbade moving the tablesaw; we spent hours pulling the finicky wooden saw through our beams. Edwin wielded the cordless drill; I kept the level in my back pocket at all times. Our sister, Kirsten, helped us lay down a floor of mudflaps and came up with plans for a garden on the east side of the hut.

In *Walden*, Thoreau spent several days “cutting and hewing timber, and also studs and rafters, all with my narrow axe” to build his home near Walden Pond. He dug himself a cellar, and, after raising his frame, moved in on July 4th. From here on, Thoreau recounts his adventures in growing small crops, in budgeting, in reading, and in solitude. Although Thoreau has

plenty of visitors and no pandemic to prevent him from going outside, he does remark on his relative isolation and solitude, writing: “There can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of Nature and has his senses still... The gentle rain which waters my beans and keeps me in the house to-day is not drear and melancholy, but good for me too.”

As I read Walden, those words struck me. The gentle rain is good for Thoreau—the isolation, a means to make him appreciate how nature replenishes itself and provides for him—and perhaps, this pandemic can be good for me too. Thoreau admits “to be alone was something unpleasant. But I was at the same time conscious of a slight insanity in my mood, and seemed to foresee my recovery.” I think we’ve all felt alone during COVID-19 without our Dordt campus community, but at the same time, nature offers some respite.

Perhaps, like Thoreau, if we are able, we can immerse ourselves in nature. Perhaps, even amid the thunderstorm of social distancing and quarantine and testing, we can stop, and breathe, and remember to go outside and see the divine at work in our growing grass and blooming flowers. Perhaps we can foresee our own recoveries.

Our hut has a door, a window, three dented trombones, a folding table, and a mattress. It keeps the wind but not the rain out. On warm nights, Edwin sleeps out there. If you sit outside the hut at sunset you can hear the frogs croaking in our own little pond. We’re still socially isolated, distanced, quarantined—but we’re not alone. We are with the grass and the frogs and the bugs and birds and our nature, our pond, our hut—they keep us company.

If you can, go outside. Embrace nature. You might find yourself feeling just a bit transcendental.

# Questions and thanks

Hannah Van Otterloo — Staff Writer

Why this? Why now? Why us?

Questions of “why” have been rebounding in our heads since the middle of spring break when COVID-19 became something more than just a disease in Italy and China. As colleges across the nation switched to online learning, some temporarily and others for the rest of the semester, we sat watching our emails.

At 10:44 a.m. on March 12, Howard Wilson, chief administrative officer of Dordt, emailed the student body, writing, “Later this evening, Dordt University will provide an update on decisions related to COVID-19 (Coronavirus).”

For the next 7 hours and 51 minutes, we sat watching our emails and wondering why. Why hadn’t Dordt told us what we were going to do about the virus yet? Why was it taking so long for them to make their decision? Why didn’t they plan for this earlier?

At 6:35 p.m., we received the news as Howard Wilson sent out the statement from President Hoekstra. “Dordt will extend spring break by one week. Although courses were originally scheduled to resume on Tuesday, March 17, they will now begin on Monday, March 23. As of March 23, courses will be held online until Monday, April 13, when we currently anticipate that in-person classes will resume. A decision regarding this possibility will be made and communicated on or before April 3.”

We waited in anticipation for April 3, and as we waited, we watched the news. As the numbers of US COVID-19 cases and deaths steadily rose, the amount of equipment our healthcare workers rapidly declined. Pictures of doctors and nurses in black trash bags caused us to wonder... Why didn’t we take this more seriously? Why didn’t we prepare?

On Wednesday, March 25, at 6:26 p.m. another email hit our student inboxes, delivering the news we hadn’t expected for another 9 days. “The Dordt leadership team has made the decision that we will not resume on-campus instruction on Monday, April 13, as previously communicated. Rather, as of today, Dordt will extend online instruction to the end of the

spring semester.”

As we sat in shock, why questions filled our minds. We began to sign up for times to return to campus and pack up our belongings. With empty rooms and “Goodbye, Dordt” or “Until Next Time...” posts flooding our social media, we were left wondering. Why this? Why now? Why us?

“Why” questions. They refuse to be satisfied. As soon as one is answered, another pops up, thrusting us into a vicious cycle. Why? Why? Why?

But for all the questions out there, one “why” question deserves our attention.

Why should we be thankful?

In these times of despair, it’s easy to only see the negatives. As we packed up our belongings and headed back to our families for the next five months, as we sit doing homework day in and day out, and as we stay locked up in our homes in effort to avoid the virus, we often forget to ponder why we can be thankful through this all.

We can be thankful for the belongings we needed to pack.

We can be thankful for the families that welcomed us home and for the homes we are able to shelter in.

We can be thankful for the food we get to eat, for the clean water we have to drink, for homework we have the ability to do, for the future time we can spend at Dordt, and for the administration that kept our best interests at heart.

But, most of all, we can be thankful for the God who cares for the lilies of the field and for the sparrows overhead, for the God who cares all the more for us, the creatures he created in his own image.

But this is not everyone’s story. This is not even every Dordt student’s story.

Some people don’t get to come back to Dordt. Some people don’t have a warm home to shelter in, a family to go home to, clean water to drink, or food to eat.

Some people don’t believe they have a God above who watches over them.

In this time, let us count our blessings as we count on the one who holds us all.

# “Life is good”

Katie Ribbens — Staff Writer

Life is good. We’ve all heard the brand name. Some of us may be sipping from one of their coffee mugs or sporting their cheeky shirts right at this very moment. But do we believe it? The phrase is something we can get behind...most days. I recently came across one of their newer shirts that made me come up short. It read, “Life is not easy. Life is not perfect. Life is good.” As Christians, I feel like this is something we should broadcast more frequently.

Now, I’ll admit I’m an optimist. But I think that regardless of our optimistic or pessimistic tendencies, we should always view our days as good, because they’ve been lovingly handed out by a good, sovereign God. I can’t help but wonder, especially in these present times, if we confuse “life is good” with “life is controlled.” It’s so easy to kid ourselves into thinking we’re in control of our own spheres of life. After all, don’t we make our schedules for the day? We decide when we eat, when we take the dog for a walk, and how long we procrastinate on our homework.

And then BAM all of a sudden, the rug has been swept out from under us. Restrictions are put in place; we can’t leave our house, we can’t see our friends, and we can’t travel. Borders are closing between countries, vacations re-planned, even weddings postponed. Our carefully scheduled lives are now thrown into chaos and uncertainty. It’s easy to complain and gripe. It’s easy to feel overwhelmed and stew in the anger and anxiety that’s been brought on in our current situation.

But how many hidden blessings have we seen come from this? All of the freedoms I’ve taken for granted now seem precious. They say that distance makes the heart grow fonder, and I can personally affirm that. Complaints about the Midwest weather and terribly long lab days are rendered moot as I was suddenly kicked off of campus. I would gladly take it all back, dissections and all. Yet...I am equally thankful to be spending this time at home with my family. My siblings are back home together, my parents are working from home, and I’ve never seen my dog so happy. She hasn’t been put in her crate for seven weeks. She gets walked every day. We get to have family dinners, family games, and family movie marathons. I’ve seen my community come together in the best way we can while following social distancing rules. We’ve found little ways to cheer one another.



Photo Credit: Katie Ribbens

# Social distancing and volunteering

Rochelle vanderHelm — Staff Writer

Welcome, Dordt students, faculty, and other concerned parties to the Dordt Diamond guide to how to help your community while self-isolating. This is a time of global anxiety, hibernating in our blanket puddles, and TikTok accounts, but is also a time in which many people are struggling.

I have heard, but I don’t know the truthfulness of the anecdote, that in the early days of the church pagans confused the term “Christians” with one that meant “kind people” because of the similarity in sound and the kindness that Christians showed to the world. Perhaps we have been given a special chance this year to bring Christ’s kindness to the world of today.

Our mobility is limited, because for the sake of the vulnerable we are told to stay home. For many college students, money donations are not financially plausible. This is a brief list of possible actions to take to help your neighbor.

1. Call services: Check out crisistextline.org to become a volunteer Crisis Counselor. This particular service requires an extended time commitment and 30-hour training that can be done online. Other options are to get in contact with your local elderly assisted living homes. These facilities are especially cut-off from outside connection and according to a study published by Mens Sana Monographs, “There is a great body of evidence of a rise in morbidity, mortality, hospitalization and loss of functional

# From a senior

Emi Stewart — Staff Writer

There goes another year. Didn’t it go by fast? I know that’s a cliché, but it’s true. I’ve been considering the things that I wish I’d been told these past years at college. Also, as a senior, I think I’ve earned the right to pretend to be old and wise for a few hundred words. So, please humor me, gather ‘round the rocking chair, and allow Grandma Emi to impart some wisdom on her grandchildren (who are only, at most, a few years younger than her).

Dear juniors:

You are *this* close to becoming seniors. You were already role models by being upperclassmen this year, but come next semester that responsibility will have doubled. Of course, the same goes for classes below you as they move up, but being a senior is a special honor that you (probably) only get one last chance at. Both students inside and outside of your major are looking up to you in class, at lunch, in extracurricular activities and beyond, whether you realize that or not. Between the flurry of final projects and stressing over finding a job after graduation, find some time to tuck away good memories. Homework is important, but dare I say it shouldn’t be the top priority of this year. I know you will lead with an abundance of grace, a good sense of humor, and a lot of love. This time next year you’ll be walking across the stage of the BJ Haan to get your diploma. Between now and then, do yourself a favor and make some lasting memories by celebrating the relationships you have built while here at Dordt.

Dear sophomores:

A lot of change is coming your way. From dorms to apartments, from introductory classes to advanced ones, from 21 meals to 5. With change comes choice—ranging in severity from who you’re rooming with, to whether you get the Defender on wheat bread or on a pretzel bun (pretzel bun all the way, btw). You are about to have even more freedom and choice than when you first came to college. What you do with that freedom, and what choices you make this next

year, are important. I’m not your parent, and neither is Dordt. While this school offers many opportunities to strengthen your relationship with God and others, it is ultimately up to you whether you participate or not. If there’s one thing I could do differently when I was back in your spot, I would make more conscious decisions. I let myself be on autopilot way too much, and by allowing that I didn’t invest as much as I could have in those spiritual and relational opportunities. I let myself get comfortable and complacent, not ever going deeper than absolutely necessary. Please, don’t allow yourself on autopilot to “make decisions.” Be aware of how you’re using your freedom and time.

Dear freshmen:

What an absolutely insane end to your first year at college. You were just beginning to get a sense of normalcy, then *BAM!* A global pandemic strikes. Juggling homework, extracurriculars, and new friendships wasn’t an easy task in the first place, and now this? My heart hurts for you guys. This is certainly not how you—or any of us, really—expected this year to wrap up. I just want to say that I’m proud of you. You’re almost through your first year of college (which is in itself an accomplishment). This has likely been your first year away from home, your first year with a full college credit workload, and your first year with a multitude of choices right at your fingertips. Next year, you’ll have all that and the added responsibility of being above another class. Take some time to think about how you felt coming to Dordt for the first time as a freshman, and treat these new faces as you would have liked to be treated. Welcome them, befriend them, and encourage them as they stumble through year one.

Okay, kiddos. I’m coming close to the word limit, so I’ll wrap it up with these final recommendations: Finish the academic year strong. Love others well. Go for a walk.

Grandma Emi

# Stay-at-home orders: have they gone too far?

Caleb Pollema — Staff Writer

“Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

These words uttered by Benjamin Franklin nearly 300 years ago have drastic application today as our nation continues to fight the coronavirus and resulting societal and economic impacts.

Let’s cut to the chase.

Do the stay-at-home orders suggested by the President and put into practice by governors of each state violate the constitutional rights and personal liberties of the individual outlined by the United States Constitution?

The short answer: YES, ABSOLUTELY!

I would like to preface this answer by stating that I am not a medical expert or political science expert, but rather an average American trying to gather facts about the current situation

so I can come to some conclusions on our present circumstances.

Having said that, I have come to the following four conclusions about our present situation regarding our constitutional rights and the future of this country as we know it. All of which I believe can be generally agreed upon regardless of political affiliation.

First, individuals have the right to freely assemble, express their religion, and publish information.

This is specifically outlined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. I understand that governors and the President have the authority from various pieces of state and federal legislation to impose these orders; however, if a citizen believes their rights are being violated they should not be punished for disobeying such an act.

For example, in recent weeks you have seen news of churchgoers fined and arrested for attending church while social distancing in their vehicles. There have been mothers arrested while taking their children to local parks.

This is ridiculous. Fundamental freedoms are being denied to the individual, which is not only unconstitutional, but denies Americans their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Second, it is deeply disturbing how the medical community has responded to this current pandemic.

I am not talking about the response of the federal government or individual state governments in this case. I am specifically looking at the “independent” medical community.

I must preface this by saying that I understand that each state and region have experienced varying degrees of severity regarding the coronavirus.

However, I find it deeply concerning that medical professionals are saying two completely different things.

Some say that we must socially distance and stay at home because this will reduce the spread of the virus. Others say that we need to be out in public in order to gain immunity to the virus. These are polar opposites.

The media portrays nurses emotionally distraught and physically demoralized from the fight against this pandemic. Conversely, some nurses are claiming that they are being laid off because no surgeries are occurring and patient totals are astronomically low.

This is frightening. Neither of these can be completely correct. Someone must be wrong.

This brings me to my third conclusion. Regardless of your political leanings, media bias in this country continues to soar higher than I ever thought possible.

It seems all too coincidental that as soon as Trump’s impeachment hearings end that there is a virus that knocks out his main claim for reelection, a booming economy.

The United States government has been affecting what the media reports and writes about for decades. Operation Mockingbird was the primary campaign used by the CIA to influence American media.

The media as we know it is not unbiased. They are not reporting the truth. This threatens the very roots of our republic.

I implore you. Seek the truth!

Do your research. Research the things I have written above. Do not let the media tell you what to think. Think for yourself. Come to your own conclusions. It is the backbone of this great country!

Finally, I believe that the solution to this pandemic has truly become worse than the problem.

The thought of impending death has created an unparalleled fear in the hearts of people. Unbridled fear has threatened to take our country. FDR was right. We do have nothing to fear but fear itself.

Numbers aside, our country has not had such a drastic reaction to a health issue like this before. What if we had the same reaction to cancer, heart disease, obesity, abortion, mental illness, drug addiction, and alcoholism? Imagine how different our world would be if we reacted with such vigor against these other issues.

How much liberty are we willing to relinquish in the name of safety? This is the question that our country has been faced with since its inception. We relinquished some of it following 9/11 with the resulting Patriot Act and the list continues.

We face another fork in the road with how we come back from this virus.

As Christians I believe that fear is the last place we can turn to during this virus. This virus is simply another reminder that death is imminent regardless of the disease that gets one there.

I take comfort in John Piper’s comments regarding the current pandemic.

“The same sovereign God that could stop the coronavirus, yet doesn’t is the very sovereignty that sustains the soul in it.”

This gives hope amid this storm. We have been given freedom is Christ Jesus. We need not live in fear.

Thus, I return to my original proposition. Are these stay-at-home orders too much? Yes.

We must never prioritize our safety above our liberty. For when this occurs, we will have neither.

I side with one of our great Founding Fathers, Patrick Henry.

“Give me liberty or give me death.”

status related to common mental disorders in the elderly patients.” Such patients may benefit from friendly conversation, even with a stranger over the phone.

2. Sew face masks: Many hospitals are asking for individuals and organizations to make fabric face masks and covers. Using these masks in non-medical situations frees up the supply of surgical face masks for hospital use. If you have supplies and a basic understanding of sewing, deaconess.com is a website that connects potential artisans (yes, you’re an artisan now) with organizations looking for masks.

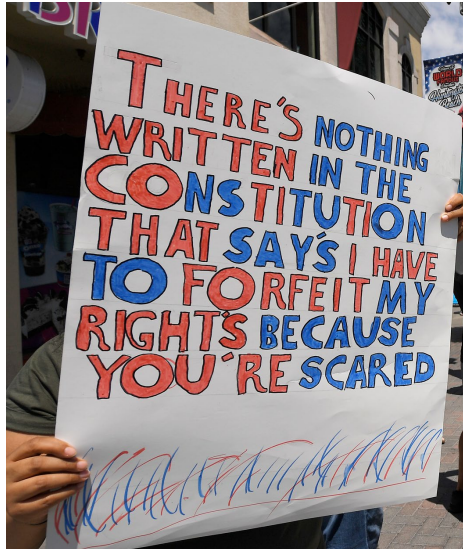
will never be able to watch a show because a professional, theater-released recording will never be available, even for purchase. They turn to watching low-quality recordings from phone cameras in the back row because they love the theater, but they don’t have access to a live show.

Thus, I am excited that theaters are showing these recordings: if you have a computer/phone and a Wi-Fi connection, you can now find a variety of plays and musicals to enjoy with your family. From Shakespeare to Weber, people around the world can now see shows that they otherwise would have only dreamed of seeing. I believe that if theaters would continue releasing shows for limited amounts of time, either for free or for a price, this would open the world of theater to a larger audience and cut down on bootlegging.

# (cont.) unexpected effects of coronavirus

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While children, teenagers, and 20-year-olds have ended up on ventilators for a serious case of coronavirus, Ribbens is most concerned about their mental health. The strain of schools closing, jobs ending, and social isolation are causing stress on parents and greater anxiety for children. College students are forced from a healthy college environment to some dangerous home situations. Ribbens said that during a video service, a health professional witnessed a caregiver abusing their child. Ribbens believes that long-term effects will include a lot of rehab, both in physical and behavioral health. Even if someone remains healthy and safe,



Contributed Photo



## (cont.) Letters to healthcare workers

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letters outside Prewitt’s home, they can email her at 6feetshorter@gmail.com and she collects letters each week. Prewitt sends out the letters each Friday, leaving something for many patients and workers to look forward to at the end of the week.

“I’d often get frustrated because I’m not a PA yet and I felt like I couldn’t make a difference in healthcare during a time that motivated me to want to go into healthcare even more,” Prewitt said.

Blessing others has been the focus of this

project, but Prewitt has learned more about herself as a pre-physician assistant too.

“Through this project I felt like I’ve been able to make a difference even though I am not technically in healthcare yet except for being a CNA. It’s been cool to see how the little things really do make a big difference. I’m excited I can also give some recognition to those that often don’t get enough recognition in healthcare.”

If you would like to send letters to Prewitt’s collection bins, you can contact her at 6feetshorter@gmail.com.

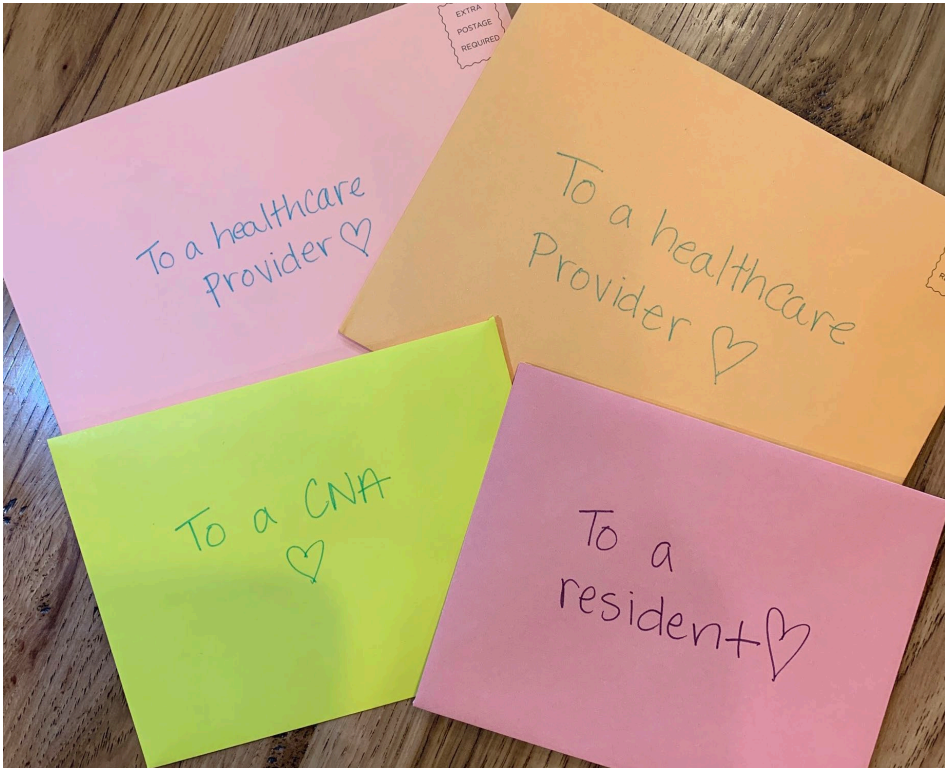


Photo Credit: Ebby Prewitt

## (cont.) what now? A look into the future of Dordt University

*continued from page 1*

being given to the possibility of playing sports without fans and instead being broadcasted via livestream.

On top of these precautions within campus, students may also find restrictions on when and where they can leave it, including Thanksgiving break.

“It would be weird and obviously somewhat different, but we think that we could probably figure that one out.” Wilson said. “We have not ruled out many ideas at this point.”

This lack of firm and final decisions is not a trait specific to Dordt. Because of the changeability of the pandemic, a feeling of uncertainty permeates all the discussions about the future of universities across the nation.

“Is this a blizzard? Would you just hunker down and get through it?” Wilson says, referencing an article written by Christian author Andy Crouch. “Is it a winter, where it is a long season? Or is it the ice age?”

While Wilson believes the COVID-19 pandemic best resembles a winter, he notes that the answer cannot be known in full until after the virus passes. In the current stage of ambiguity, many experts have predicted systematic changes to universities. Whether it be a shift in educational philosophies or a complete step in the direction of online-only learning, these transitions would extend far beyond the present measures of virus containment.

“Is there a way to go back to things we thought of as normal before or are things just going to be different? Dr. Dave Mulder said. “I think the answer is really unclear at this point.”

Mulder teaches education at Dordt and specializes in online learning. While he believes the current virtual academic experience is challenging accepted practices in the education

system, revealing their flaws and inefficiencies, he still advocates for in-person classes.

“Is the most important thing that we’re all breathing the same air?” Mulder said. “I would suggest that it’s still pretty important.”

He cites social presence theory for his reasoning, an educational philosophy that emphasizes the impact of the educator showing themselves as a real human being to the learner. An online platform, by nature, hinders this process.

Mulder also points out that the current period of online learning should not serve as an example for the field as a whole, should schools continue to use it in the fall.

“We have to think of this as triage.” Mulder said. “This is not typical online teaching. We should call this emergency distance learning.”

With a more advanced notice, educators could cater their teaching methods and subjects to an online medium, creating a more tailor-fit experience for all. Additionally, as 70 percent of Dordt faculty have completed online training, Wilson believes the university is set to weather whatever the world throws at them.

Even as some schools brace themselves for a drop in enrollment numbers, Dordt has recorded a higher than normal registration for returning students next year and ranks in the top quartile in financial strength for their type of institution.

“It might be one of the ten plagues, but it’s not the apocalypse.” Wilson said.

As Wilson and others meet to determine how to move forward next semester, he begins each one with a quote: “The sun will come up tomorrow and there is a bright future for Dordt University. The impact of the virus is like a great series of waves, but God has made us so that we float and don’t drown.”

## Working to “maintain fellowship”: a conversation with LGBTQ+ students

*Lauren Hoekstra— Staff Writer*

(All student names have been changed to protect their privacy)

When Kaci’s parents first found out she was lesbian during her freshman year of high school, her mom asked her if she knew the consequences of her actions and feelings. The next morning, Kaci’s parents approached her and told her that it wasn’t right and she couldn’t live like that. They told her that they would never accept this part of her. Kaci, a Dordt underclassman, believes that if she did get married, her parents would not be at her wedding.

Kaci’s story isn’t as uncommon in the LGBTQ+ community as one might believe. A recent study conducted by research scientists Rosario and Schrimshaw for the National Institute of Health (NIH) found that of sexual minority youth, one-third experience parental acceptance, another third experience parental rejection, and the remaining third do not disclose their sexual orientation by late teens or early twenties.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning and “Plus” (LGBTQ+) individuals make up 4.1 percent of the American population according to the Pew Research Center. The percentage of LGBTQ+ undergraduate college students is slightly higher than the overall American percentage, falling at about 10 percent according to the American College Health Association.

According to the Dordt University Student Handbook, homosexual relations, as well as extramarital sexual relations, are “unbiblical and therefore prohibited,” which lines up with the views of the Christian Reformed Church (CRCNA). If found to be committing these actions, a student or faculty member may “be dismissed from the university.”

Dr. Justin Bailey, Assistant Professor of Theology, said that the CRCNA’s position is

that homosexuality is outside of the design of creation, but it is not the only way that humans fail and fall short of God’s intention. Bailey commented that “all of our sexuality” is disordered in some way or another and all of our failures are met by the hope and challenge of the gospel.

However, according to Bailey, the church’s main goal is always to “support and connect with people who are LGBTQ+.”

This policy and the beliefs of the CRCNA can make students who are LGBTQ+ on campus feel afraid that they will be kicked out by administration, judged by their peers if they find out about their sexuality, or discriminated against by faculty who believe homosexuality is wrong.

Isabella, an upperclassman lesbian, said “No straight student is worried [about] being expelled because of premarital sex. But LGBTQ+ students are.”

Aaron Baart, Dean of Chapel, believes that having same-sex attraction is a big thing to live with and not have someone to talk to about it. He wants to be the person that students can go to and trust. The confidentiality provided in Campus Ministries and the Counseling Center, provide students those opportunities.

Desiree, a Dordt upperclassman, said that being bisexual in high school was much easier than being bisexual in college. Her school was located in an area where most schools were atheistic while the Christian schools were Christian in name only. In her school, people didn’t “blink twice about [sexuality]” and the whole school was supportive of her and others who had come out.

Baart felt “angry and disappointed at the church” because of the way in which they have often conveyed their beliefs, insisting that it has often been the Church’s posture or approach, rather than its actual beliefs, that have caused the greatest hurt.

“I wish there was a greater opportunity to maintain fellowship,” Baart said, concerning people who are LGBTQ+ and those who are against it.

Matt Drissell, Associate Professor of Art, told a story of going to an AIDS/HIV walk to raise money for a cure in the early 2000s. As he and his family came to the finish line, there was a group of Christians standing and screaming phrases like ‘all gays are going to hell’ and ‘AIDS is God’s judgment.’ Drissell was furious.

“This was the face of Christianity that others were seeing,” he said. “The posture of condemnation and hate had no resonance with what I thought the Christian faith was.”

He continued that when Christians are passive about their beliefs regarding homosexuality, they are often grouped in with these protestors at this AIDS/HIV march.

Malik, an underclassman gay man, mentioned that it feels like some people are not aware that LGBTQ+ students are in Sioux Center and that they have stories, dreams, and passions of their own.

“They exist on campus,” he said. “You talk about them like they’re issues, but they’re people. We’re people. Life would be better at Dordt if people approached it that we are people.”

Isabella has had a mixture of both good and bad experiences at Dordt. She has had several professors who have been “extremely kind and even accepting,” regardless of their personal beliefs about homosexuality.

Drissell said that he grew up in a conservative household that condemned homosexuality, but as he grew and met people who were gay and heard their stories, it “demystified and destigmatized” the concept for him.

While living in New York, he had landlords who were lesbian, and as he and his family got to know them and form relationships with them, even spending Easter Sunday with them one

year, it meant so much more.

“It makes such a difference when it’s personal,” Drissell said.

Regardless of sexual orientation, Baart’s biggest concern when meeting with students is to make them feel cared for and loved, as most of the discussion surrounding people who are LGBTQ+ in the Christian church is not made up of the love and care that these people deserve.

“I believe that [homosexuality] has been a conversation largely dictated by cultural norms, not Christian love,” Baart said. “When either side chooses to elevate sexuality to the totality of someone’s identity, we have seemingly made mountains out of molehills.”

Desiree wondered why being gay was considered a greater sin than lying or stealing was in the eyes of many that she has met. “They’re just people. They are so much more than their sexuality.”

Despite the church’s intentions, Bailey believes that the church often falls short, a belief most likely echoed by those who are LGBTQ+. He said that, as a church, Christians are called to treat every person as someone who bears the image of God, regardless of whether or not they agree. Christians are called to “listen and love and make space” for those who are different.

However, “The church actually responds mostly in ignorance and fear. I think it’s a failure of imagination [of what others go through].”

Drissell firmly believes that the “loudest, most strident voices that are condemning you” are not the only voices. He believes that there are many other voices out there that will accept and love students who are LGBTQ+ who may not find solace or love in anyone else.

“In my understanding of the Christian faith, our number one priority is to love God and number two is to love others,” Drissell said. “In order to do this, we must seek understanding. To stand at a distance and condemn is not Christlike.”